The MIT Press

World Policy Institute

A Dissenter's Guide to Foreign Policy
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Review by: David C. Hendrickson
World Policy Journal, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 102-113
Published by: The MIT Press and the World Policy Institute
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/40209909
Accessed: 09/12/2011 16:40

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BOOKS

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A Dissenter's Guide to Foreign Policy

David C. Hendrickson

America Unbound: The Bush Revolution in Foreign Policy
Ivo H. Daalder and James M. Lindsay
Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2003

Rogue Nation: American Unilateralism and the Failure of Good Intentions
Clyde Prestowitz
New York: Basic Books, 2003

Fear's Empire: War, Terrorism, and Democracy
Benjamin R. Barber
New York: W. W. Norton, 2003

The Bubble of American Supremacy: Correcting the Misuse of American Power
George Soros
New York: PublicAffairs, 2003

America the Virtuous: The Crisis of Democracy and the Quest for Empire
Claes G. Ryn
New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2003

The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic
Chalmers Johnson
New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004

The American journalist Louis Fischer called it "the Kronstadt," after the brutal repression by the Bolsheviks of the sailors' revolt on Kronstadt Island, near Petrograd, in 1921. Fischer, a fellow traveler who had responded to the idealism of the Soviet experiment but grew disenchanted and then embittered, used the term to signify that moment of "ideological melting" when doubts and uncertainties sprang forward into a public repudiation of what had previously touched the inner spring of feeling and devotion. He was trying to explain his own attraction to and subsequent revulsion from Soviet communism, an experience that he and five other famous writers chronicled in *The God That Failed*.[1] As much as "the Kronstadt" symbolized the moment of epiphany or awakening leading to repudiation, there were few foreign sympathizers of Russian communism who experienced their "Kronstadt" after the actual events of 1921. Yet further iniquities—the horrors of collectivization, the show trials, the devouring of the children of the Revolution in purges and assassinations—were necessary, and even then most fellow travelers, like Fischer himself, did not experience their

awakening until jolted by the Nazi-Soviet pact of 1939.

For much of world public opinion, the Iraq war launched by the Bush administration in March 2003 has constituted a kind of Kronstadt. What the expat columnist William Pfaff calls "the American narrative" of power pledged to peace is no longer believed in much of the world. Favorable attitudes toward America dropped by 20 to 30 percentage points in foreign countries between 2001 and 2003, the general pattern showing almost no discrimination on the basis of race, gender, class, national origin, or sexual orientation. In Indonesia, where a vice minister said Bush was "the king of the terrorists," American approval ratings fell from 75 percent in 2001 to 61 percent in 2002 to 15 percent in 2003. The loss of public approval was no less evident in countries whose governments supported, rather than opposed, the American war. In Spain and Italy, whom Bush corralled into his "coalition of the willing," public opposition was just as strong as in the "chocolate nations" of "old Europe." Even in Britain, which alone among the coalition of the willing contributed significant numbers of troops to the Iraq war, disaffection within the political establishment—left, right, and center—was profound. In the estimation of the world, America had become a rogue nation. The acts of war its own public opinion deemed brilliant, just, and noble were seen elsewhere as clumsy, illegal, and reckless.

These books, with varying emphases, offer a guide to this disaffection. All are savagely critical of the Bush administration's course in responding to 9/11. Together, they offer a dissenter's guide to American foreign policy that throws a powerful light on the deformities and extravagances that have come to define it.[2] Despite philosophical perspectives touching many different points on the political spectrum, the authors share a remarkable consensus on what is wrong with the Bush policy, and they are not terribly far apart on the remedy.

Most of the authors seem to have undergone something like a Kronstadt, in which the sheer enormity of what the Bush administration was attempting provoked a fundamental reevaluation of the belief that the United States was essentially, and despite imperfections, a tremendous force for good in the world. For them, as indeed for this reviewer, that proposition is now in grave doubt. "Who would have thought sixty years ago," writes George Soros, "when Karl Popper wrote [*The*] *Open Society and Its Enemies*, that the United States itself could pose a threat to open society?" Alas, as Soros notes, that is precisely what is happening. "At home, Attorney General John Ashcroft has used the war on terrorism to curtail civil liberties. Abroad, the United States is trying to impose its views and interests on the rest of the world by the use of military force, and it has proclaimed the right to do so in the Bush doctrine." Needed soon, it would appear, is a new edition of *The God That Failed* that will take the measure of the world's disillusionment with the United States.

Inside the Beltway

Ivo Daalder and James Lindsay are former National Security Council staffers under Clinton who are now ensconced at the Brookings Institution and the Council on Foreign Relations, respectively. Their critique of the Bush administration's approach to national security policy, which is centered on the origins and aftermath of the Iraq war, is from a moderate Democratic perspective. Their summary of the administration's innovations, which they regard as revolutionary, gives a compact definition of the Bush Doctrine and an intimation of the critique that they pursue: "He relied on the unilateral exercise of American power rather than on international law and institutions to get his way. He championed a proactive doctrine of preemption and de-emphasized the reactive strategies of deterrence and containment. He promoted forceful interdiction, preemp-

tive strikes, and missile defenses as means to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and he downplayed America's traditional support for treaty-based non-proliferation regimes. He preferred regime change to direct negotiations with countries and leaders that he loathed. He depended on ad hoc coalitions of the willing to gain support abroad and ignored permanent alliances. He retreated from America's decades-long policy of backing European integration and instead exploited Europe's internal divisions."

Daalder and Lindsay emphasize that the real revolution was not in America's goals abroad, "but rather in how to achieve them." Though damning on the diplomatic costs of the Iraq invasion and on the catastrophic misjudgments of civilian "planners" in the Pentagon,[3] they do not explicitly challenge the purpose of disarming Iraq but instead insist that it ought to have been pursued through multilateral means, or at a later time. On the North Korean crisis, they give indications of wishing to outflank Bush on the right, suggesting in an alarmist vein that "in not living up to the principles of his own foreign policy revolution," Bush "may have let those who would do America harm make the choice for him."[4]

The authors conclude with a ringing denunciation of unilateralism that emphasizes the heavy costs of badly alienating the world and warn that Bush, despite recent moderating trends, remains at heart a revolutionary. Though the book succeeds admirably in offering a patient historical reconstruction of the first 30 months of the Bush administration, the authors might have cast a more piercing light on the administration's grand design: its ends as well as its means deserve criticism. The term "neoconservative" is also given much too narrow a construction by the authors, who reserve it for prominent intellectuals and journalists outside the administration. Daalder and Lindsay insist, for example, that Vice President Dick Cheney is not in fact a neocon. A more accurate perspective would see Cheney as the leader of the pack and neoconservatism as the big tent ideology under which Bush has marshaled and evangelized the Republican Party.

The world's alienation is also the leading theme of Clyde Prestowitz's *Rogue Nation*. Unlike Daalder and Lindsay, who focus on the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, Prestowitz ranges far and wide over the broad spectrum of policy, with extensive consideration of defense, trade, the environment, and international treaties, all framed with an acute eye toward the most important relationships with foreign countries. He acknowledges that he might seem an unlikely candidate for an accounting of how far wrong his country has gone; he grew up a Republican, founded his college's conservative club, supported Vietnam, and served in the Reagan administration as a trade advisor, earning a reputation as a trade hawk. In crucial respects, however, it is precisely Prestowitz's conservatism that makes him a determined foe of the Bush doctrine. "The imperial project of the so-called neoconservatives," he writes, "is not conservatism at all but radicalism, egotism, and adventurism articulated in the stirring rhetoric of traditional patriotism."

Prestowitz traveled widely in the course of the book's preparation, meeting with hundreds of foreign leaders and opinion makers, and had discovered well before 9/11 the "depth and rapidly expanding extent of foreign alienation from America." America, he insists, must learn to listen and stop using its virtues as a means of avoiding recognition of its vices. The fundamental objection, which he heard repeatedly voiced by America's traditional friends, is that the United States is abandoning the institutions it built and traducing the ideals that had previously distinguished its position as a world power.

Though Prestowitz writes that his main purpose is to explain "to baffled and hurt Americans why the world seems to be turning against them, and also to show

foreigners how they frequently misinterpret America's good intentions," his emphasis is decidedly on the former. Prestowitz shows, in many areas, U.S. policies that are myopic, irresponsible, and often self-defeating, and one does not come away from this book impressed by Washington's good heart and unselfish motives.

The charming vision of free trade and mutual prosperity for all, for example, is in reality one in which the world's most powerful state exploits its dominant position to secure special advantages, a far cry from the reciprocity promised in liberal theories of free trade. Due to various emergency measures, as Prestowitz points out, nearly 75 percent of Brazil's exports lacked effective access to American markets in 2002. Prodigious subsidies to American cotton growers, of a piece with Bush's policy of awarding special governmental favors to political allies, doom West African cotton growers to a depressed world price and destitution. Prestowitz is not anti-globalization, but he insists that if American-led globalization is to last "it must spread benefits widely and equitably while being sensitive to the social and political needs of many different societies." It now fails badly at those essential tasks.

Prestowitz also gives an acute rendering of the distortion of priorities at the heart of America's energy policy. The "false arithmetic" that Jefferson said was often employed to justify war is nowhere more in evidence than in the purblind subsidization of cheap energy as a kind of birthright, an unhealthy appetite perfectly symbolized by the gas-guzzling and road-hogging sports utility vehicle. Enormous as the costs of this are—oil imports approaching 15 million barrels a day, soaring trade deficits, yearly expenditures of hundreds of billions of dollars on military enterprises to secure access to Persian Gulf and Central Asian oil—the real costs are not registered in gas prices or computed in national policy, quite as if an accountant charged with balancing the books forgot to count liabilities. The pattern "is to use as much as we want, produce as much as we can, and fight for the right to do both with whatever military muscle it takes."

Prestowitz gives a careful examination to both the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change and a handful of other international treaties, and makes a strong case that Bush's attitude toward these various ventures is extremely unwise.[5] He bemoans the excessive influence of the Israel and Taiwan lobbies, rightly criticizing the assumption that America should blindly follow the lead of these small allies, whose policies sometimes collide with vital American interests. It is difficult for a bare-bones summary to convey the richness of Prestowitz's excursions across the broad range of foreign policy issues facing the United States, but these are conducted with wit, sophistication, and a refreshing sense of practical idealism. While all six of these books are excellent and have many virtues, *Rogue Nation* is the book that every American should read. It would be a very good omen were Prestowitz to win an important post in a new Democratic administration.

The Liberal Critique

America Unbound and *Rogue Nation* give the critics of American foreign policy ample space, but the criticism is often given in a reportorial mode and with some detachment. This is not the case with Benjamin Barber's *Fear's Empire* or *The Bubble of American Supremacy* by George Soros. Both are brilliantly executed polemics that pull no punches, both written in a hurry but over a lifetime, as Barber remarks of his own book. Soros, who was the world's most successful speculator before becoming one of its most inspired philanthropists, aims above all at the defeat of Bush in the 2004 presidential election, and his book has the feel of a campaign tract; Barber's approach is more philosophical and densely reasoned (as befits the Kekst Professor of Civil Society at the Uni-

versity of Maryland). The visions set forth by the philanthropist and the philosopher, nevertheless, are remarkably similar. Both give a trenchant account of the deformities of the war on terrorism, emphasizing that Bush's leveraging of fear to secure his own program actually constituted a profound victory for the terrorists. For both authors, reclaiming American policy from the wild excesses of the "supremacist" project does not mean withdrawing from the world but engaging it on fundamentally different terms.

Barber calls this alternative strategy "preventive democracy." He contrasts the Pax Americana sought by Bush, which "envisions global comity imposed on the world by unilateral American military force," with "*lex humana*," which "works for global comity within the framework of universal rights and law, conferred by multilateral political, economic, and cultural cooperation." Eagles and owls, in his depiction, claw for control over American foreign policy. The eagles, of whom the most forceful voice is the president himself, are "unilateralists with attitude," motivated "by an overriding belief in the potency of missionary rationales for and military solutions to the challenges of global insecurity." The owls, by contrast, stand for "muscular global law secured by cooperation and global governance, on enforced collective security measures rather than unilateral American might." The eagles, he allows, are in one sense right: American preponderance in the various dimensions of global power "means there can be no viable world without America: no prosperity for the poor, no rule of law for nations, no justice for peoples, no peace for humankind." The converse, he believes, is also true: "There can be no viable America without the world: no safety for American citizens, no security for American investors, no liberty for American citizens, unless there is safety, security, and liberty for all."

Of all the dissenters from the Bush policy, Barber offers the most thorough critique of the preventive war strategy. Likening the Bush administration to the drunk who searches the wrong side of the street for his keys because "the light is better over there," Barber writes of the administration that it "prefers the states it can locate and vanquish to the terrorists it cannot even find." The choice to go after "rogue states" with no direct ties to the perpetrators of 9/11 was more than just incoherent: it was "defective, inefficacious, even perverse." The threat posed by terrorism could not be alleviated by the preventive war strategy, but it could be and very likely was worsened by it. The very term "weapons of mass destruction" was a misnomer, mendaciously conflating weapons of profoundly different significance. These sleights of hand were just a few instances of the "greased logic" by which the Bush administration justified the Iraq war, a war that did not enhance American security but which inflicted grievous harm on the structures of international cooperation and law.

Barber's writing is filled with passages of remarkable power and beauty, and his style is so seductive and his argument so compelling that one is almost too bashful to offer objections. However, I've got three. Though Americans, like others, certainly have a duty to work toward greater well-being for the world's peoples, it is not true that security, prosperity, and liberty for Americans depend upon the universal realization of these goods. A more realistic standard, yet one consistent with the dictates of morality and justice, is suggested by Montesquieu's summation of the principle on which the law of nature and nations was founded: "that the various nations should do to one another in times of peace the most good possible, and in times of war the least ill possible, without harming their true interests."[6]

Barber, secondly, calls for an internationalism that slights the value of a concert among the great powers, emphasizing an egalitarian and nonstatist approach that

underestimates the contributions that states, especially the most powerful ones, must make if there is to be a peaceful international order.

Finally, Barber unwisely denigrates the concept of deterrence and indeed insists that its putative absurdities and contradictions are nearly equal to those presented by the doctrine of preventive war. Only the most horrific threats of mass murder, Barber seems to believe, qualify as demonstrations of force that may deter an adversary, and he simply assumes that deterring Iraq meant threatening it with obliteration. Deterrence, however, need not depend on illegal or immoral threats of force, especially against powers of inferior rank. In fact, it was entirely sufficient to threaten Saddam with a conventional war to depose him as a means of deterring his use of weapons of mass destruction or his invasion of other countries. Both of those prospects, given the sheer disparity in power between the United States and Iraq, were absurdly exaggerated by proponents of war, a point apparent even before it was discovered that Saddam had none of the alleged weapons. Much as Barber would protest the imputation, his denigration of deterrence can only serve to give aid and comfort to the preventive war doctrine he decries. It does so by radically undermining confidence in the stability of deterrent relationships and fostering the belief that security can only be purchased by disarming the adversary. If such is the widespread belief, and peaceful expedients promise no immediate relief, what then remains but war?

Though George Soros does not venture on a critique of deterrence, his overall argument is very similar to Barber's. Soros identifies a potent but malign union between "market fundamentalists" and "religious fundamentalists" who dominate the Republican Party and drive U.S. policy, a twisted American variant on the forces of "McWorld" and "Jihad" analyzed in Barber's pioneering work of a decade ago. Soros, too, criticizes the administration's barely disguised belief that might makes right and notes the obfuscatory purposes behind use of the expression "weapons of mass destruction." Like Barber, he emphasizes the gross distortion of priorities that prompts the United States to spend hundreds of billions of dollars on a war of choice but that has put it in last place among the rich nations in the aid it offers (as a percentage of GNP) for the economic development of the world's poorest societies.

With the Iraq war, Soros perceptively argues, the United States fell into a classic pattern, the victim turned perpetrator, and its strategic doctrine promised an unending war that could not be won. "Terrorists are invisible; therefore, they will never disappear. They will continue to provide a convenient pretext for the pursuit of American supremacy by military means. That pursuit, in turn, will continue to generate resistance, setting up a vicious circle of escalating violence." Soros likens the war on terrorism to the war on drugs, suggesting that in both cases the "remedy is inappropriate to the disease," though one might well go further with this critique. In both wars, the profound belief in the utility of force leads inexorably to repressive "remedies" that actually worsen several dimensions of the problem. As with other systems of dementia, this belief is a symptom of the disease of which it pretends to be the cure.

Soros emphasizes oil and Israel as key yet hidden factors in generating support for the Iraq war, although he concedes that the real motives remain shrouded in mystery. Oddly, he accepts that liberating Iraq from a heinous dictator and introducing democracy "is indeed a noble cause, which could have justified the invasion if the president had made a case for it." Soros, who supported the Kosovo war, is loathe to surrender either the general right of humanitarian intervention or the duty of coming to the aid of threatened peoples, though he heatedly condemns the administration's unilateral approach and emphasizes that Iraq is the last

place he would have chosen for a project demonstrating the virtues of democracy and open society. "Admittedly," he writes, "Saddam was a heinous tyrant and it was a good thing to get rid of him. But at what cost?"

Though Soros's attitude is representative of much liberal criticism of the war, it has the unfortunate effect of legitimating the principle of democratic imperialism while reducing the liberal critique to haggling about the price. A better ground, I believe, is the ancient and today still widely accepted legal principle that places the remedy for tyranny in internal revolution rather than external intervention. All the malign characteristics of the American war and occupation, especially the anarchy it let loose in Iraq, attest to the wisdom of the traditional rule locating the right of revolution in insiders rather than outsiders. Few revolutions in recent times—particularly the upheavals in Eastern Europe, South America, and East Asia—meant the destruction of civil order, such as was accomplished by the violent revolution brought about by the United States in Iraq. Even had authorization been squeezed from a reluctant Security Council (which as it happened did its duty and refused), the U.S. overthrow of Saddam would still have violated the basic legal principle placing the right and responsibility for the internal institutions of a given state in the people of that country.

A defensible conception of humanitarian intervention—one that accepts the duty of halting ongoing genocide or stabilizing failed states through collective outside intervention, if such can be done at an acceptable cost—should not embrace the far more radical claim of a right to smash tyranny through large-scale war. Such breakages of the state inevitably carry the serious risk of widespread civil anarchy, a condition that many philosophers, Hobbes and Kant among them, have deemed even worse than tyranny. Humanitarian intervention can be reconciled with the rights of nations and with the basic requirements of international society only if it excludes the pretended authority to undertake violent external revolution. The latter is an ignoble rather than a noble cause.[7]

Though now identified often with "realpolitik," respect for the principle of national independence was once closely associated with the liberal tradition. Wishing success to the possibility that the new governments in South America would find their way to free government, Jefferson nevertheless insisted that "they have the right, and we none, to choose for themselves." Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt took the same view, though repeated mischaracterizations of their outlook toward legitimate intervention have lent their names to revolutionary projects that they quite specifically condemned.[8] Despite pronounced cosmopolitan and universalist tendencies, Barber's work also conveys genuine respect for this principle, and he rightly emphasizes both the impossibility and the illegality of imposing democracy "at the muzzle of a well-wishing outsider's rifle." Democracy grows, Barber writes, "not from the ashes of war but from a history of struggle, civic work, and economic development. State-focused preventive war is its least likely parent." Using preventive war as a means to democracy misconceives "both the consequences of aggressive war and the requirements for democracy's founding and development."

One of the reasons Soros was so opposed to the invasion of Iraq was that it was likely to give nation building a bad name. It has done that, I would argue, not only because the enterprise was conducted with a negligence bordering on the criminal but also because it demonstrated how easily the barriers to war come down once people are persuaded that they enjoy a right or a duty to overthrow tyranny in foreign countries. The experience holds a lesson not only for neoconservative supremacists but also for liberal interventionists. A decent foreign policy must have room for a doctrine of humanitar-

ian intervention, but we must also be conscious of the abuses to which that duty is put and the ease with which it is prostituted to the naturally stronger motives of mere profit, of reason of state.

Jacobin Frenzy

The danger posed by unbounded power is given a thorough airing in all these works, but a particularly penetrating discussion may be found in *America the Virtuous* by Claes Ryn. A professor of political philosophy at Catholic University, Ryn identifies the new supremacists as "neo-Jacobins," a term that this reviewer finds very apt. Writing in 1797, Alexander Hamilton charged that France under the influence of the Jacobins had "betrayed a spirit of universal domination; an opinion that she had a right to be the legislatrix of nations; that they are all bound to submit to her mandates, to take from her their moral, political, and religious creeds; that her plastic and regenerating hand is to mould them into whatever shape she thinks fit; and that her interest is to be the sole measure of the rights of the rest of the world." Sound familiar? It is a delicious historical irony that neoconservatives who vituperate all things French have contracted the same disease that brought France to delirium some 200 years ago, or it would be if it weren't so depressing. The elements of concordance are quite striking.

"In the most powerful and culturally influential nation of the Western world," Ryn writes, "the signs are now everywhere that the will to dominate is breaking free" of traditional restraints. Ambitions to remake foreign societies through force that an earlier generation of Americans would have regarded as megalomaniacal are, for the neo-Jacobins, the true test of virtue. Like the Jacobins, the Bush neoconservatives are hostile to restraints on American power, ignoring the old lesson—propounded, as Ryn notes, by a great many philosophers—that such restraints are central to civilized life. Also parroting French Jacobinism is "the widespread presumption that in all essential respects America is superior to all other countries and that it has a right and a mission to prescribe the destiny of all mankind, by military force if necessary." Hamilton condemned these attitudes when the French manifested them on the same grounds with which they ought to be condemned today; such claims are repugnant "to the general rights of nations, to the true principles of liberty, [and] to the freedom of opinion of mankind."[9]

There is much wisdom in Ryn's book, and the moral realism he calls for and explicates commands respect. "Precisely because the United States cannot avoid playing a major international role," he argues, "it needs to recognize that the first responsibility of any nation, as of any individual, is to examine self and to try to alleviate the flaws of self." I would quarrel with certain aspects of his argument: Ryn disparages the Enlightenment and identifies Rousseau, incongruously, as a prototypical Enlightenment figure (instead of, say, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Vattel, Hume, Smith, Gibbon, or Robertson).[10] The American founders, in my reckoning, were apostles of the Enlightenment and it is a mistake to make them embody a "pre-Enlightenment" moral and political sensibility, as Ryn does.[11] These disagreements, though they raise important historical and philosophical issues, are not particularly consequential for his larger argument, for Ryn is onto deep truths about the nature of politics that the neoconservative ascendancy blithely disregards. In the cruelest cut of all—identifying the Bush revolution with the messianic, centralist, and militaristic ideologies flowing from Jacobinism, including certain disagreeable varieties of twentieth century totalitarianism—he is exactly right.

A Pertinent Question

Disillusioned and embittered by George Washington's alleged acts of personal and political treachery, Thomas Paine wrote a

public screed to the president on July 30, 1796, containing one of the more famous insults in the history of letters: "The world will be puzzled to decide," he told Washington, "whether you are an apostate or an imposter, whether you have abandoned good principles or whether you ever had any." That may have been an impertinent question to ask of the venerable Washington, but it is one that well frames the problem of assessing the significance of the Bush policy. How revolutionary a change does it mark from the past? Has the United States suddenly become an empire or has it long been such? Has Bush betrayed a hallowed tradition or simply thrown off the mask?

My own reaction to the Bush revolution was to argue that the United States was an apostate rather than an imposter, that Bush had broken in critical respects from the policies and attitudes that previously defined America's world position, moving from containment and deterrence to preventive war, from a commitment to multilateral processes to unilateralism, from the balance of power to a bid for unquestioned strategic superiority, from support for state independence to the embrace of a revolutionary program of regime change and radical reconstruction, from reverence to contempt for international law.[12] At the same time, it is undeniable that these characteristics did not appear suddenly on the morning of September 12, 2001. They each have their various precedents, some recent, some distant. The national story, according to most of the authors, is thus not without elements of both apostasy and imposture. America assuredly has abandoned good principles—but not for the first time.

Barber, for example, finds old precedents for Bush's "axis of evil," writing that Bush was on a 200-year roll in celebrating the exceptionalist traits in American political culture. Exceptionalism, in his reckoning, "offers special rationalizations both for the isolationism that has tried to separate America from the world's tumult and for the interventionism that has pushed America out into its very heart. An idealist American foreign policy goes abroad in the name of the virtues of home and remakes the world in its own image not because it wants to dominate the world but because (it believes) it can only be safe in a world that is like America." Prestowitz notes the long-standing characteristic that "to endorse a war, Americans must see themselves on God's side, fighting for good against evil. And because the fight is against evil, the victory must be absolute, and surrender unconditional." Despite recognition of various cultural traits that give aid and comfort to the new imperialism, most of the authors nevertheless emphasize apostasy in their accounts: "The beacon of democracy the world once most admired," as Barber puts it, "has abruptly become the maker of war the world most fears." Under Bush, the United States has undermined "the international framework of cooperation and law of which it was once the chief architect."

More pessimistic in his view of American power, and intent on uncovering the deeper roots of American imperialism and militarism, is Chalmers Johnson, for whom America is more imposter than apostate.[13] Johnson is an academic specialist on East Asia and a former Cold Warrior who experienced his own Kronstadt while researching the operations of the U.S. military on Okinawa in the mid-1990s, when it dawned on him that the exploitations he discovered, far from being atypical, were representative. In *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, published in 2000, he reviewed U.S. misconduct, mostly in East Asia, and warned that the United States was sowing immense hatred and that it would one day reap the whirlwind.[14]

The Sorrows of Empire continues and elaborates the previous book's inquiry, but its specific focus is the empire's "physical geography"—its vast network of bases "completely beyond the jurisdiction of the occupied nation," its extraordinary apparatus for

electronic surveillance and covert action, and its unprecedented military dominance. Uncovering what Lenin called the "deep structures" of power, Johnson gives an intrepid tour of the infrastructure of the military-industrial complex and of the network of "permanent naval bases, military airfields, army garrisons, espionage listening posts, and strategic enclaves on every continent of the globe" by which the United States creates and maintains military supremacy.

Like the other dissenters, Johnson does tell a story of American apostasy. The 9/11 attacks, he emphasizes, "produced a dangerous change in the thinking of some of our leaders, who began to see our republic as a genuine empire, a new Rome, the greatest colossus in history, no longer bound by international law, the concerns of allies, or any constraints on its use of military force." What distinguishes Johnson from most other dissenters is his insistence that the corruption of power he identifies set in much earlier than sunnier versions of American history and diplomacy would like to admit. It is only in the last few years, he writes, that a growing number of Americans began to grasp "what most non-Americans already knew and had experienced over the previous half century—namely, that the United States was something other than what it professed to be, that it was, in fact, a military juggernaut intent on world domination."

Anyone inclined to think that the problem of American policy is limited to Bush and Iraq will be given cause for serious reconsideration, if not indeed recantation, by Johnson's account. He demonstrates that America's Cold War record, with its preference for right-wing dictatorship over left-leaning democratic governments, constitutes a less than shining model of emulation, and that the "habitual use of imperial methods over the space of forty years became addictive." He shows that the expansion of bases in the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Persian Gulf is closely tied to oil interests (the war on terrorism providing a handy basis on which to dominate the entire area); that the face America presents to the world is increasingly military, the Pentagon having usurped many functions previously belonging to diplomats and spies; that the United States blatantly exploits its hegemonic position to aggrandize the world's arms trade to itself, an objective it pursues with much greater avidity than economic development; that the "special forces" have become a private army of the president; and that America's militarized institutions are so secretive that it is virtually impossible to subject them to democratic accountability. Despairingly, Johnson recalls all the old prophecies from America's founders that the republic would be destroyed by unchecked executive power and an overgrown military establishment, and finds the fit between their prophecy and our condition uncanny. Johnson sometimes allows his moral indignation to interfere with the correct interpretation of human motives, but his account is a chilling reminder of the danger posed by the acquisition of overbearing influence by a (now greatly magnified) national security state. "The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power," in Dwight Eisenhower's words, "exists and will persist."

Boom or Bust?

How far will the Bush revolution extend? That is a question that all the authors grapple with, and it has no obvious answer. In general, they take the view that the revolutionary fires at the heart of the administration are by no means extinguished, even if these do not burn as fiercely as they did during the run-up to the Iraq war. At the same time, however, they demonstrate pretty conclusively that the Bush policies are unsustainable and will end in tears. With U.S. credibility and the preventive war doctrine badly wounded by the failure to find the alleged weapons of mass destruction, with American ground forces seriously overstretched in Iraq, with the dawning

realization that America has badly alienated Iraqi opinion but cannot leave without sparking a civil war, with the explosive growth of America's budgetary and trade deficits, and with the demonstration of renewed dependency on the "international community" to carry through the U.S. commitment to Iraqi reconstruction and other essential tasks, there are tangible signs that the imperial project has encountered far stiffer resistance than its advocates had anticipated. Once revolutionary zeal collides with hard reality, what then? Won't a reaction set in? How powerful? When?

Those questions are similar to speculations in which market participants engage when making educated guesses about future price movements. As Soros suggests, political life has manias just like financial markets do. "In the early stages of the process, the participants in a bubble do not see the absurdity of their convictions; on the contrary, reality seems to confirm their perceptions. Only at a later stage does the divergence between expectations and the actual course of events become apparent. Then there is a moment of truth followed by a reversal." One might add that manias are characteristically driven further by short sellers who throw in the towel and are forced to join in the buying, and the Democrats often found themselves in that disagreeable role over the last generation, incongruously outbidding the Republicans while getting short-squeezed on national security issues. That is just one of the factors that makes it difficult to determine whether we stand, in Soros's words, "at the moment of truth or at a testing point that, if it is successfully overcome, will reinforce the trend." One thing is clear: Bush's reelection would confirm and ratify the revolutionary changes he has introduced to U.S. strategy. That this would constitute a sanctification of unholy propensities is a point on which all the authors would heartily concur. ●

Notes

1. The other five authors were André Gide, Richard Wright, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, and Arthur Koestler. See *The God That Failed*, ed. Richard Crossman (New York: Bantam, 1959).

2. For a similar effort a generation ago, see Irving Howe, ed., *A Dissenter's Guide to Foreign Policy* (New York: Anchor Books, 1968). Lewis Coser noted in the foreword that though the book was called a guide, he thought of it "in a more modest way—as a collection containing a number of signposts which, though by no means always in accord, all point in the same general direction." For other such signposts today, see the indispensable clearinghouse for dissenting views at Justin Raimondo's www.antiwar.com, and the Statement of Principles of the Coalition for a Realistic Foreign Policy at http://www.realisticforeignpolicy.org/content/view/17/33/. The signatories (of whom I am one) consist mostly of academic international relations specialists and former government officials, all of whom have issued public dissents from the Bush policy. Among the authors here reviewed, Johnson is also a signatory.

3. See also James Fallows, "Blind into Baghdad," *Atlantic*, January-February 2004, pp. 52–74.

4. Contrast the more sober account of the Korean crisis and the constructive suggestions for resolving it in Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation*, pp. 245–48, 278–79.

5. See also Nicole Deller, Arjun Makhijani, and John Burroughs, eds., *Rule of Power or Rule of Law* (New York: Apex Press, 2003).

6. Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 7.

7. As the philosopher Michael Walzer once noted, the circumstances that justify revolution do not, at the same time, justify foreign intervention. When foreign armies invade, as Walzer explains, the rights of the people are violated even if they enjoy a just cause of revolution. "Their 'slowness' has been artificially speeded up, their 'aversion' has been repudiated, their loyalties have been ignored, their prudential calculations have been rejected—all in favor of someone else's conceptions of political justice and political prudence" (Michael Walzer, "The Moral

Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 9, no. 3 [1980], p. 215). From this perspective, which is also that of customary international law, the U.S. war must be considered an offense against the people of Iraq, in whom alone was vested the right of revolution by a long-established principle of the law of nations. On humanitarian intervention, see U.N. International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa, Ontario: International Development Research Center, 2001), which Soros quotes extensively. That the Iraq case did not meet the threshold requirements for humanitarian intervention is demonstrated in Kenneth Roth, *War in Iraq: Not a Humanitarian Intervention,* Human Rights Watch, January 26, 2004. For my own understanding of what these criteria should be, see David C. Hendrickson, "In Defense of Realism: A Commentary on *Just and Unjust Wars*," *Ethics and International Affairs*, vol. 11 (1997), pp. 19–53.

8. See Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Wheeling, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1979), pp. 9–12. Franklin D. Roosevelt pointed to this essential affinity between the domestic and international faces of liberalism in an address of January 6, 1941: "Just as our national policy in internal affairs has been based upon a decent respect for the rights and the dignity of all our fellow men within our gates, so our national policy in foreign affairs has been based on a decent respect for the rights and dignity of all nations, large and small."

9. Alexander Hamilton, "The Warning" (1797) and "Pacificus" (1793), excerpted in Arnold Wolfers and Laurence W. Martin, eds., *The Anglo-American Tradition in Foreign Affairs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1956). Ryn, I should make clear, does not make use of these citations from Hamilton, but their perspectives on this question are perfectly simpatico.

10. On the various European Enlightenments, see J. G. A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 3 vols. to date (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–2003), esp. vol. 2.

11. See David C. Hendrickson, *Peace Pact: The Lost World of the American Founding* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2003), pp. 386–87.

12. David C. Hendrickson, "Toward Universal Empire: The Dangerous Quest for Absolute Security," *World Policy Journal*, vol. 19 (fall 2002); *idem*, "Imperialism vs. Internationalism: The United States and World Order," *Gaiko Forum*, vol. 2 (fall 2002); *idem*, "Preserving the Imbalance of Power," *Ethics and International Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2003).

13. To similar effect, see Andrew J. Bacevich, *American Empire: The Realities and Consequences of U.S. Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

14. Chalmers Johnson, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000).